

Coping with the Cost of Child Care in Fairfax County

Findings from the 2002 Westat Survey on Affordability



Fairfax County Office for Children
Fairfax County Child Care Advisory Council
Fairfax County Employer Child Care Council
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Key Findings

Over 85,000 children are in child care in Fairfax County. Nearly half of the children age 12 and younger in Fairfax County (48%), an estimated 85,650 children, are regularly cared for by someone other than a parent. (p. 3)

Child care is not affordable for thousands of families in Fairfax County. Among an estimated 55,800 families who pay for child care in Fairfax County, two-thirds (67%) say they manage the costs by making sacrifices- often considerable ones. (p. 4)

Child care expenses affect lower income families disproportionately. Families earning less than \$30,000 per year use 11% of their income for child care, compared with only 6% used by families earning \$60,000 or more. (p. 5)

Child care often dictates how time is spent at work and at home. Among low to moderate income families with children 12 and younger, more than one-third of parents have worked additional hours to cover child care expenses (35%) or have changed jobs to get more money or flexibility to meet child care needs (34%). (p. 6)

Mothers stay out of the workforce because they cannot solve their child care problems. More than one-fourth (27%) of mothers who do not work say the reason is that they cannot find good or affordable child care or they cannot earn enough to make it worthwhile to work after paying for child care. (p. 7)

Children, especially older ones, are sometimes left to care for themselves. 41% of children aged 11 or 12 (approximately 10,350) are reportedly in self-care on a regular basis. This far exceeds the national average of 19%. Eight percent of children aged 8, 9 or 10 (approximately 3,500) are also in self-care on a regular basis. (p. 8)

Families are largely unaware of resources available for assistance with child care costs. Among low and moderate income households with children, 71% are unaware of the Child Care Assistance and Referral program and 44% are unaware of the School Age Child Care program. (p. 9)

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Dedication



This report is dedicated to the memory of Peggy Jansons Craft, 1933-2003. Peggy Jansons Craft, an early childhood educator, was a child care pioneer in Fairfax County. In 1975, after several years as a teacher in Reston's Lake Anne Nursery Kindergarten, Peggy Jansons Craft founded PALS Early Learning Center in Reston with her neighbor and friend, Lynn Lilienthal. PALS was the first child care facility licensed by Fairfax County to provide infant care. PALS was committed to serving children from low income families and provided spaces for children through the Child Care Assistance and Referral program. For the next 23 years Peggy Jansons Craft provided professional, loving care for infants, toddlers, pre-schoolers, and school-agers and thoughtful, compassionate counsel to their parents. Her death on February 15 was a great loss to the child care community of Fairfax County and the County's children.

Background of the Fairfax County Child Care Affordability Survey

Child care is an integral part of life in Fairfax County. A high percentage of the population works, 81.3% of men and 63.3% of women, and many of those workers are parents with young children. Fairfax County strives to be a desirable and equitable workplace for everyone. As the population in Fairfax County has grown over recent years, so has the cost of living. **For many families, the cost of child care is more than they can pay. It strains budgets, forces parents into unwanted career decisions, and may even place children's well-being in jeopardy.**

The importance of quality child care is extensively documented in scientific research showing the effects of early learning experiences on a child's brain development, structure, and function. As many parents have observed first-hand, the childhood education component of quality child care plays an important role in preparing children for school. This benefit may be especially important for children of low income families, many of whom are at risk for school failure.

In a county with a high cost of living many families cannot obtain quality child care without help. With average monthly rent in excess of \$1,200 for a two-bedroom apartment in 2002, even dual-income families can be hard-pressed to make ends meet. **The Fairfax-Falls Church Community Needs Assessment consistently ranks "making child care affordable" as one of the top four problems facing the community.**

The problem is particularly acute for working families earning low to moderate incomes. These include teachers, emergency response personnel, care givers in hospitals and nursing homes, office administrative staff, and other working people essential to the quality of life in Fairfax County. Child care can mean the difference between their having a job and not having one. This is

also true for workers in such service establishments as restaurants, dry cleaners, and hair salons. At any time, they may need to change hours, cut back on their work week, find a second job, or otherwise juggle their priorities – and their lives – to care for their children.

The County recognizes that affordable child care can be the key to parents finding and keeping a job. Through subsidies, referrals, and support services, the Fairfax County Office for Children (OFC) helps low and moderate income families find and pay for child care programs serving children from birth to intermediate school. OFC administers Head Start for the County as well as the School Age Child Care (SACC) and Child Care Assistance and Referral (CCAR) programs. Subsidies for SACC and CCAR are based on a sliding fee schedule that takes into account income and family size. In recent years, OFC staff have noted a rising rate of enrollment turnovers in the CCAR program and, based on exit interviews, the staff has concluded that many families leave because they can't afford child care costs.

Directors of child care centers report seeing other disturbing trends: Families are falling behind in their payments. **Because a family's co-payment for subsidized child care increases with family income, some wage earners are reluctant to accept raises or work additional hours that might result in increased child care costs that they could not afford.**

A center director in Fairfax says, "Some families are stretched so thin they must choose between paying for child care or taking their children to the doctors and filling prescriptions."

A center director in Reston says, "I am finding myself making more referrals to social service agencies for families needing help not only with child care costs, but also with utilities, food, and clothing."

To document the kinds of issues that may be involved, OFC asked the research firm Westat to conduct an objective study of the situation. Westat developed a survey instrument in 2002 designed to obtain the following kinds of information:

- child care arrangements that parents make,
- the cost and affordability of those arrangements,
- the impact of child care costs on the family, and
- awareness of County programs that help working families pay for child care and participation in those programs.

The result was the Fairfax County Child Care Affordability Survey, the findings of which are summarized in this report and presented along with anecdotal data and quotes compiled by the Office for Children independent of the Westat survey. This information should assist residents and policymakers in exploring ways to make quality, affordable child care more widely available to families in Fairfax County.

Summary of Findings

Key findings from the Survey are reported below:

1. Over 85,000 children are in child care in Fairfax County.

Nearly half of children 12 and younger in Fairfax County (48%) are regularly cared for by someone other than a parent. This translates into an estimated 85,650 children who are in child care. The need for child care services is to be expected in a county where a high percentage of women work. Well over half of households with children 12 or younger (56%) are “working families,” in which both parents work or a single parent works, as shown in Exhibit 1a. This translates into an estimated 60,691 working families in Fairfax County

with children 12 and younger.¹

Among children in working families (95,200, based on Survey estimates), nearly three-quarters (73%) are regularly cared for by someone other than a parent, as shown in Exhibit 1b. This represents 69,500 children. Their caregivers could be relatives, family child care providers or other individuals who are not relatives, or child care centers. The use of child care varies according to the age of the child. Among children between the ages of 24 months and pre-kindergarten, nearly all children (94%) are in child care. This percentage drops to 73% when children are in kindergarten through 4th grade and to 39% for children in 5th through 7th grades.

Exhibit 1a. - Household Characteristics

	Percent of Survey respondents	Estimated number in Fairfax County
Total households with children 12 or younger.	100	110,55
Family's employment status		
All parents in household working.	56	60,691
At least one parent in household not working.	44	47,536
Mother's employment status		
Working.	58	62,799
Not working.	42	44,751
Race/ethnicity		
White, non-Hispanic.	60	66,82
Black, non-Hispanic.	8	48,453
Asian/Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic.	12	13,671
Hispanic.	13	13,907
Other.	7	7,702
Income		
\$47,500 or less per year.	18	20,254
\$47,501 to \$95,000 per year.	36	39,478
More than \$95,000 per year.	46	50,826
Use of child care		
At least one child in care.	51	55,813
No children in care.	49	53,401

*One percent of respondents did not report either a mother or a father in the household. NOTE: Percents do not sum to 100 due to rounding.

¹ In the 60,691 working families (Westat estimate) are an estimated 95,200 children under 12, nearly three-quarters of whom are in child care, or a total of 69,500 children.

Exhibit 1b. - Who cares for children of working families.

Age	Relative	Nanny or other non-relative	Center	Total in non-parental care	Cared for by parent(s) only
All children	18%	28%	38%	73%	27%
0-23 months	21%	47%	21%	87%	13%
24 months-Pre-K	24%	29%	64%	94%	6%
K-4th Grades	13%	30%	39%	73%	27%
5th-7th Grades	18%	11%	15%	39%	61%

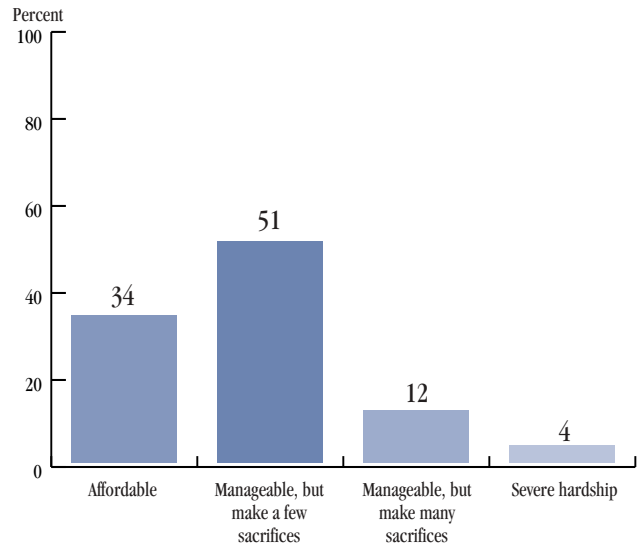
NOTE: Percentages in first three columns do not sum to the percentage in the fourth column because children may have more than one type of arrangement.

2. Child care is not affordable for thousands of families in Fairfax County.

Among an estimated 55,800 families who use child care in Fairfax County (see Exhibit 1a), two-thirds (67%) say they manage the costs of child care by making sacrifices—often, considerable ones. Based on the survey, more than 37,000 families are paying more than they can afford for child care. As shown in Exhibit 2a, 16% of families report making “many sacrifices” (12%) or experiencing “severe hardship” (4%). It is estimated that close to 9,000 families are experiencing this level of difficulty.

Looking more closely at families whose incomes put them in the bottom one-fifth of households with children in Fairfax County, more than half (54%) of those who report making sacrifices to pay for child care have had difficulties meeting basic needs, specifically, making the rent or mortgage payment, buying food, paying for medical care, or paying the gas, water, or electric bills. As shown in Exhibit 2b, minority (Black and Hispanic) households are much more likely to experience such difficulties than are other households.

Exhibit 2a. - What families using child care say about its affordability



Jessica D., a single mother, paid \$92 a week to keep her two children in child care while she worked as a customer service representative. She relied on a child care subsidy from Fairfax County to balance her family’s budget. “But even then,” she says, “every month I had to decide which one I was going to pay late – the child care center or my landlord.” Last July the center informed Jessica D. that her credit was no longer good and she had to withdraw her children.

Exhibit 2b. - Percent of families using child care who report difficulty meeting household expenses in the past 6 months, due in part to child care costs

Income level	Difficulty paying for				
	Rent or mortgage	Food	Medical Attention	Gas, water, or electricity	At least one basic need*
Total	20	11	12	12	26
Yearly Income					
\$47,500 or less per year	37	25	31	37	54
\$47,501-\$95,000 per year	21	16	12	9	28
More than \$95,000 per year	12	4	4	5	13
Family composition					
One parent family	31	19	14	28	38
Two parent family	17	10	12	9	23
Race/ethnicity of child					
White, non-Hispanic/Asian/ Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic	16	9	5	9	18
Black, non-Hispanic/Hispanic	31	20	33	22	50

* This column combines the types of hardships. This is the percent of families who reported difficulty paying for either their rent or mortgage, necessary food, necessary medical care, or utility (gas, water, electric) bills.

3. Child care expenses affect lower income families disproportionately.

In percentage terms, child care takes a bigger bite out of the family budget of low income households than of higher income households. **The Westat Survey looked at expenditures across a broad range of income categories (Exhibit 3) and found that families earning less than \$30,000 per year use 11% of their income for child care, compared with only 6% used by families earning \$60,000 or more.** The proportion of household income that is used for child care expenses does not vary much by race or ethnicity or in one-parent versus two-parent households.

The Fairfax County Office for Children notes that low income families' use of child care depends on financial resources and can vary greatly with changing costs. **When child care costs are too high, parents may cut back on the hours their child spends at a center or family child care home and fill the gap by finding care givers among friends, relatives, or older children.** The change often disrupts schedules for both parents and children and results in a precarious balancing act, in which hours spent in gainful employment must be traded off against the costs and logistics of child care.

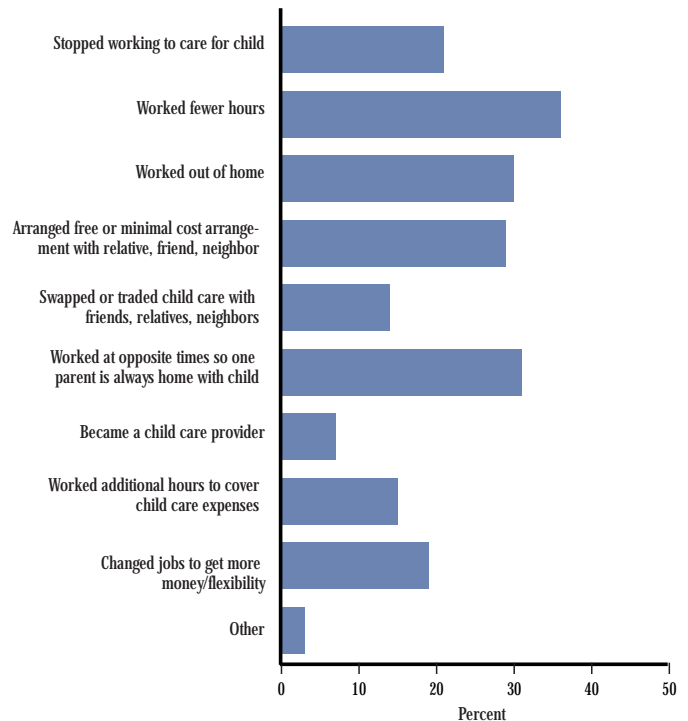
Exhibit 3. - How much is spent on child care

Income level	Percent of yearly income used for child care	Per year	Per month	Per week
Total	7	\$6,360	\$530	\$122
Income				
Less than \$30,000	11	2,413	201	46
\$30,000-\$59,999 per year	9	4,039	337	78
\$60,000-\$99,999 per year	6	4,469	372	86
\$100,000 or more per year	6	8,925	744	172

4. Child care often dictates how time is spent at work and at home.

The need for child care often results in parents altering work and family routines. They may work fewer hours or one or more parent may work longer hours to cover the costs of child care. Some parents may change jobs. Others may find they need to work at opposite times so that one parent is always at home with the child. Families often use more than one approach to meet child care needs, as shown in Exhibit 4a.

Which strategy is used depends largely upon income, as shown in Exhibit 4b, and on family composition. Among families earning \$47,500 or less, Fairfax County's lowest one-fifth in income, more than one-third of parents have worked additional hours to cover child care expenses (35%) or have changed jobs to get more money or flexibility to meet child care needs (34%).

Exhibit 4a. - Percentage of families reporting various methods used as a result of the cost of child care.

NOTE: Percents do not add to 100 because respondents could choose multiple answers.

Single parents are especially likely to adopt these strategies to cover child care costs. 24% of single parent families compared to 14% of two-parent families worked additional hours; 30% compared to 18% changed jobs. In many households, a common response is for parent to work at opposite times so that one is always at home to provide child care (31%).

household income, the more likely it is that a mother will stay out of the work force for these reasons.

Exhibit 5a shows the percentages of mothers not working for various reasons related to child care needs. Of the estimated 44,750 mothers not currently working (see Exhibit 1a), 17% think that working does not pay

Exhibit 4b. - Methods used to meet child care costs, by household income

	\$47,500 (one half of median) or less	\$47,501-\$95,000	More than \$95,000
Stopped working to care for child	32	26	12
Worked fewer hours	38	35	35
Worked out of home	27	26	33
Arranged free or minimal cost arrangement with relative, friend, neighbor	29	35	25
Swapped or traded child care with friends, relatives, neighbors	12	15	13
Worked at opposite times so one parent is always at home with child	42	30	27
Became a child care provider	18	9	2
Worked additional hours to cover child care expenses	35	15	6
Changed jobs to get more money/flexibility	34	18	14
Other	8	3	1

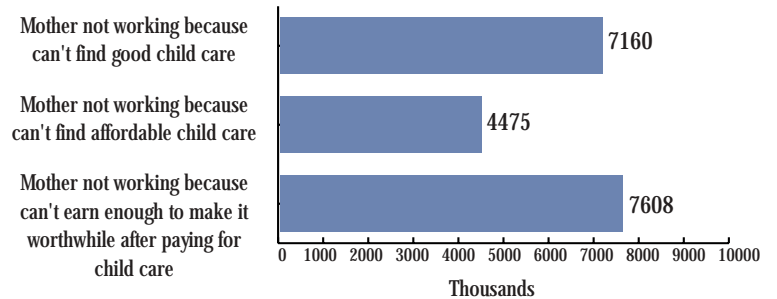
5. Many mothers stay out of the workforce because they cannot solve their child care problems.

In order to provide child care, mothers sometimes cut back on their workweek and consequently earn less than they need to meet their families' financial needs. A significant percentage stop working altogether. More than one-fourth (27%) of mothers who do not work say the reason is that they cannot find good or affordable child care or they cannot earn enough to make it worthwhile to work after paying for child care. The lower the

enough to make it worthwhile after paying for child care costs, 16% do not work because they cannot find good child care, and 10% do not work because they cannot afford child care. (Mothers staying out of the work force for reasons related to child care may cite more than one reason; the proportion who gave one or more of the reasons above is 27%, or roughly 12,000 women.)

Ledmia F. is a single mother with a three-year-old. She earns \$500 a week as an administrative aide, half of that goes to rent and utilities. Of the remaining \$250 a week, as much as \$150 goes to child care, leaving her a bare \$100 for food, clothing, medical expenses, and other necessities.

Exhibit 5a. - Estimated number of mothers not working for various reasons



In Exhibit 5b, these reasons are examined by three income categories. Clearly, mothers in the lowest income category often do not work because they cannot earn enough to make it worthwhile after paying for child care (28%). This is less of an issue for mothers in the middle income category (17%) and in the high income category (11%). Among low income families, one quarter of non-working mothers do not work because they cannot find

6. Children, especially older ones, are sometimes left to care for themselves.

In the interviews, parents were asked whether a particular child was “responsible for him/herself on a regular basis, even for a small amount of time.” The results indicate that, of the estimated 46,580 children aged 8,

Exhibit 5b. - Percentage of mothers not working for various reasons, by household income

	\$47,500 (one half of median) or less	\$47,501-\$95,000	More than \$95,000
Can't find good child care	26	15	12
Can't find affordable child care	25	8	6
Can't earn enough to make it worthwhile after paying for child care	28	17	11

affordable child care. In contrast, only 8% of the middle income group and 6% of the high income group are not working for that reason. In addition, 26% of nonworking mothers in the low income group are not working because they cannot find good child care (although it may be affordable), compared with 15% and 12% in the middle and high income groups, respectively.

9, or 10 in Fairfax County, about 3,500 (8%, slightly above national average) are so-called “latchkey children,” in self-care on a regular basis. Among 11- to 12-year-old children, self-care is much more common. Of the estimated 25,545 children aged 11 or 12 in Fairfax County, 10,350 children (41%) are reportedly in self-care on a regular basis.²

The reporting of self-care for 8- to 12-year-old children was similar across income levels and among one- and two-parent families. White, non-Hispanic

² This is a conservative measure of self-care. Not included in these numbers are children who are left under the supervision of a child 12 years or younger.

children were reported to be in self-care at over twice the rate of either Black children or Hispanic children (21% versus 10%).

The actual number of children in self-care may be higher, because researchers generally believe self-care is under-reported. **Even without under-reporting, the rate of self-care among 11 and 12 year olds in Fairfax County far exceeds the national average.** In the 1999 National Household Education Survey (NHES), 19% of 11- to 12-year-old children were reported to be in self-care.³ This compares with 41% of the 11 to 12 year olds in Fairfax County.

Three children who now participate in a County-sponsored after-school program had this to say about what it was like being a latch-key child:

"I used to go home and watch TV everyday and wait for my mom to come home." Nancy, 11

"I would just sit at home, watch TV, and play video games." Juan, 13

"I would sit around and play with my rabbit for 5 hours and eat snacks." Louis, 12

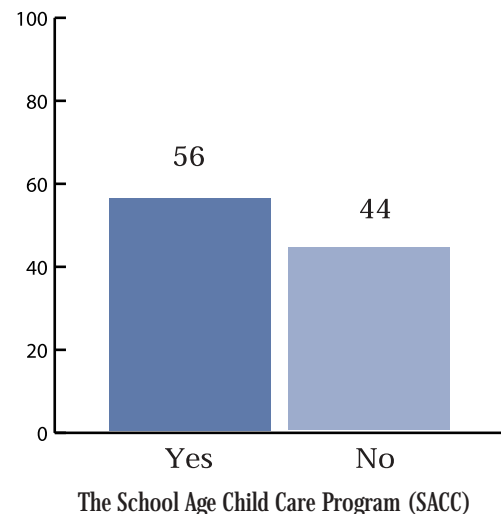
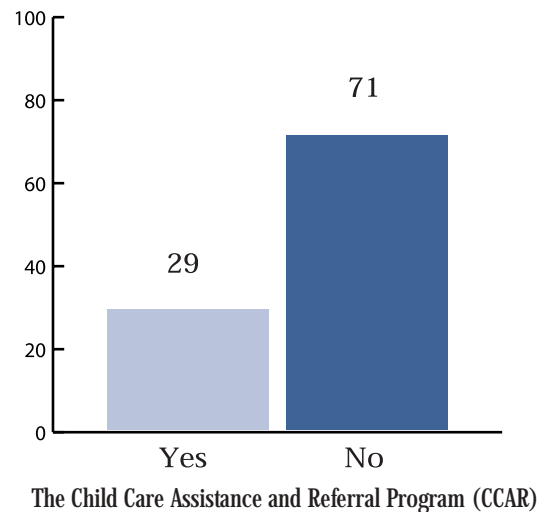
7. Families are largely unaware of resources available for assistance with child care costs.

The Child Care Assistance and Referral Program (CCAR) in Fairfax County provides financial assistance for child care to low and moderate income families in which parents work or are in work-related training. The program pays for child care in centers, family child care homes, or School-Age Child Care (SACC). Income-eligible families are responsible for paying only a portion of the fee. CCAR uses a graduated fee scale based on gross income, family size, and the number of children in care. As income rises, families' co-payments also rise.

Yet among families whose incomes put them in the bottom one-fifth of households with children, a disturbingly high 71% are unaware of CCAR and 44% are unaware of SACC.

Exhibit 7b reveals that even among families with incomes of \$25,000 or less, the very ones most likely to benefit from CCAR and SACC, awareness is low. There is an especially significant difference in awareness between White, non-Hispanic families (37% aware of CCAR, 70%

Exhibit 7a. - Percentage of families aware of child care programs in Fairfax county, among households earning \$47,500 or less per year



³ Special tabulations, by Westat from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1999 National Household Education Surveys Program, Parent Survey.

aware of SACC) and Hispanic families (28% aware of CCAR, 40% aware of SACC).

CCAR and SACC are currently operating at full capacity. Close to 6,400 children are receiving subsidies through CCAR monthly. Of the more than 7,000 children in SACC, the families of 1,900 children pay a reduced rate. Because the survey found that many families were unaware of CCAR and SACC, a greater commitment to outreach may be required to increase awareness among working families who can benefit from these programs.

Subsidies provided by Fairfax County, which leverage local dollars to draw down federal and State funds, are the most reliable way of ensuring that the County's neediest children receive adequate care.

While some companies in Fairfax County do, in fact, also offer on-site child care as a way of recruiting and retaining employees, the support provided to these programs does not significantly reduce the fees to families.

Gloria U. was a stay-at-home mother until her 5-year-old son entered kindergarten and her 4-year-old entered day care. With a Fairfax County subsidy, Gloria U. could pay for child care and this created the opportunity for her to take a job and continue studying English. She now works 20 hours a week, earning \$6 an hour, which covers her child care co-payment, transportation, and English classes. "Child care assistance from the County makes it possible for me to work and learn English," she says. "That is how I will move ahead."

Exhibit 7b. - Percent of families aware of the Child Care Assistance and Referral Program (CCAR) and School Age Child Care (SACC), among households earning \$47,500 or less per year, by income and race/ethnicity

	Percent Aware of CCAP	Percent Aware of SACC
All households	22	58
Income		
\$25,000 or less per year	30	55
\$25,001 to \$47,500 per year	28	56
Race/ethnicity		
White, non-Hispanic	37	70
Black, non-Hispanic	37*	64*
Asian/Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic	10*	49*
Hispanic	28	40
Other		

*This estimate is supported by a sample size under 30.

How the Survey Was Conducted

The Survey was conducted over the telephone with adults in households selected at random. Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish, and questions were asked about one or two children in the family. The adult in the household who considered himself or herself most knowledgeable about the child's care was interviewed about topics such as family composition and size; ages of children; types of child care used; reasons for using child care; child care costs; the impact of child care costs on employment, housing, and other aspects of family life; and hardships related to the cost of child care.

Interviews were completed on a total of 621 children in 418 households. Of the households contacted to participate, 80% agreed. However, there were forms of nonresponse other than refusals such as language problems and the inability to reach anyone in the household that affected the overall response rate.⁴ The final response rate of 65%, which is above average for a research effort of this kind. When appropriately weighted, the Survey sample is representative of households in

Fairfax County and Fairfax City with children 12 or younger and is also representative of children 12 or younger who live in these locations.

Data collection took place between February and April of 2002. Because Fairfax County has a special interest in low and moderate income families that would be eligible for child care subsidies, these families were sampled at a rate higher than their naturally occurring prevalence in the County population. Low and moderate income families were defined as families whose annual income was less than or equal to one half of the median family income for Fairfax County⁵; these families' incomes place them in the bottom one-fifth (18%) of households with children in Fairfax County.

For a complete discussion of data collection, weighting procedures, response rate, and sampling error, see the Methodological Appendix.

⁴ For a more complete description of response rates, see Methodological Appendix.

⁵ The annual income that represents one half of median family income in Fairfax County in 2000 is \$47,500.

Methodological Appendix

The Fairfax County Child Care Affordability Survey was a random-digit-dial telephone survey of a probability sample of households in Fairfax County and Fairfax City containing at least one child age 12 or younger. The adult in the household who was most knowledgeable about a child's care arrangements was the respondent to the survey. Typically, this was the child's mother. If the household contained one or two eligible children, that child or both children were selected for the study. If the household contained more than two age-eligible children, two children were randomly selected to be the focus of the child care survey questions. The targeted sample size for the survey was 600 completed cases, that is, child-level information on 600 different children.

The survey data collection took place from February through April of 2002. Because Fairfax County has a special interest in low income families that would be eligible for child care subsidies, these families were sampled at a rate higher than their naturally occurring prevalence in the County population. Low income families were defined as families whose annual income was less than or equal to one half of the median household income for Fairfax County, that is, families whose annual income was less than or equal to \$47,500.⁶ All families who reported an income of less than \$60,000 were selected for this survey, and approximately half of the families who reported an income of \$60,000 or greater were sampled.⁷ When appropriately weighted, the full sample is representative of households in Fairfax County and Fairfax City with children 12 years or younger (using the household-level file and weight) and of children 12 years or younger who live in Fairfax County or Fairfax City (using the child-level file and weight).

1 Data Collection Procedures

Data for the Fairfax County Child Care Affordability Survey were collected in telephone interviews with parents in households in Fairfax County and Fairfax City. Random-digit-dialing methods were used to contact the households, and the data were collected using a paper survey. When contact was not made on a first call to a sampled telephone number, multiple call attempts were made at different times of day and on different days of the week in order to maximize the chances of reaching the household. As noted above, the adult in the household who was identified as being most knowledgeable about the child's care was selected as the respondent. This was usually the mother. In households with one or two eligible children (this is children age 12 or younger), interviews were conducted about the only child or both children. In households with more than two eligible children, two children were randomly selected for the survey. English and Spanish versions of the screener and parent interview were developed, and interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish.

As in any survey, some households refused to participate in the study. Such cases were set aside for a period of time and then an attempt was made to convert the refusal to a response. Other methods to maximize survey response included mailings to refusal and maximum call cases (those telephone numbers at which at least seven call attempts had been made but no interview had been completed). A letter was mailed to cases with an initial refusal, describing the purpose and sponsorship of the study and emphasizing the importance of participation. A telephone number was provided in the letter for respondents to call to schedule an appointment to participate in the survey or to obtain more information. Interviewers followed up with additional attempts to contact these households and conduct the interview.⁸ A letter was also mailed to cases that

⁶ The annual income that represents one half of median family income in Fairfax County in 2000 is \$47,500.

⁷ When a respondent declined to state whether the household's income was under \$60,000 or \$60,000 or more, the household was treated as \$60,000 or more for sampling purposes, due to the high incidence of upper-income households in Fairfax County and Fairfax City.

⁸ The overall refusal conversion rate for the study was 49 percent (completes + ineligible cases due to income or lack of children 12 or younger / completes + ineligible cases due to income or lack of children 12 or younger + refusals). Fairfax County and Fairfax City residents who initially refused were more willing to participate after having received information about the study.

had received a maximum number of calls (10 calls) without completing the interview but had not refused. In the last month of data collection, a message describing the study and providing a telephone number was left on answering machines.

2 Response Rates

A total of 5,724 telephone numbers were sampled for the study. Of these, 132 numbers were identified as business numbers and 396 numbers were identified as nonworking through a prescreening procedure conducted prior to the beginning of data collection; these 528 numbers were not fielded. A total of 5,196 numbers were fielded. Most of these numbers were not eligible for the study for one of a number of reasons: because the number was nonresidential or nonworking, because the number belonged to a household with no eligible children, or (in a very small number of cases) the telephone number belonged to a household outside Fairfax County or City. In addition, 224 screened households with children were excluded in the process of subsampling households with high incomes (described above).

A total of 621 child interviews were completed in a total of 418 households. The overall cooperation rate was 80 percent (cooperation rate = (completes + ineligibles) / (completes + ineligibles + refusals)), however, forms of nonresponse other than refusals (maximum call cases, language problems) also occurred. The overall response rate was 65 percent (completes + ineligibles / completes + ineligibles + refusals + language/ hearing problem + other non-response).

Fifty percent of the interviews about children were conducted in households with incomes of \$60,000 or less; likewise, 50 percent of all households in which any interviews were conducted had incomes of \$60,000 or less. A total of 68 child interviews (11 percent) in a total of 42 households (10 percent) were conducted in Spanish. All but two of the households (3 child interviews) that completed a Spanish interview were in the low income group (household income of \$60,000 or less).

3 Weighting Procedures

For the 2002 Fairfax Child Care Affordability Survey, household-level and child-level survey weights were developed for estimation purposes. Each responding household was assigned a weight that reflects the probabilities of selection during the different stages of sampling. Also included in each household weight are adjustments for: 1) multiple telephone numbers within a household, 2) household nonresponse, and 3) poststratification by income. The household weights are further described in Section 3.1.

The child weights were created from the final household weight and include two additional adjustments. The child weight contains adjustments for the within household probability of selection, and poststratification by age, gender, and ethnicity. The child weights are further described in Section 3.2.

3.1 Household Weight

The first weight developed for the survey was a household-level weight. This weight was formed based on the probability of selection and a number of statistical adjustments. Each stage of the weighting process is described below.

3.1.1 Base Weight

The household base weight is the inverse of the probability of selecting the household's telephone number from clusters of telephone numbers. These clusters of telephone numbers are working 100-banks within area code exchanges having at least 90 percent coverage in Fairfax County.⁹ The selection of telephone numbers occurred separately within high and low income strata defined by the median income in the eligible area code exchanges.

3.1.2 Adjustment for Sampling Mailable Addresses

To increase the residential rate of dialed telephone numbers, telephone numbers with mailable addresses were identified from the original sample. These telephone numbers were then subsampled in each income stratum at different rates to obtain the required full sample size. The household base weight was adjusted to reflect these sampling rates.

3.1.3 Adjustment for Subsampling High Income Households

The weights of high-income households were increased to reflect their probability of selection due to subsampling during the screening stage. Households with an income of \$60,000 or above that responded to the screening interview were subsampled for the extended interview. High-income households with a telephone number having an even last-digit were selected for the survey, which resulted in a subsampling rate approximately equal to 0.5.

3.1.4 Multiple Telephone Number Adjustment

A weighting adjustment was needed to account for households with more than one non-business telephone number used for talking. Households with multiple telephone numbers have a higher chance of selection than households with only one telephone number. To reflect this component of selection, the sampling weight was divided by the number of eligible telephone numbers in the household.

3.1.5 Nonresponse Adjustment

The household weight was adjusted for households that did not respond to the screening interview. The eligibility of the nonresponding households was undetermined, so their weights were redistributed proportionally between eligible households with children aged 12 and younger and ineligible households. For this procedure, households were placed in demographic groups that received separate adjustments due to different rates of response. These demographic groups were determined by the percent Black and the percent of college graduates within the area code exchange.

3.1.6 Poststratification (Household-Level) Adjustment

To increase the precision of the household-level estimates, the survey weights were adjusted to match population estimates from a survey¹⁰ of over 11,000 households conducted in Fairfax County in 2000. From the prior survey, estimated numbers of households with children aged 12 and younger were obtained for three income categories: 1) under \$50,000, 2) \$50,000 to \$99,999, and 3) \$100,000 and above. A ratio adjustment was used so that the

⁹ A 100-bank is the set of 100 telephone numbers formed by the area code, exchange, and first two digits of the local number (for example, 703-555-12xx).

¹⁰ 2000 Fairfax-Falls Church Community Assessment

weighted totals in each income category would equal the control totals from the prior survey. This poststratified weight is the final household weight.

3.2 Child Weight

The second weight developed was a child-level weight. As is the case with the household-level weight, this weight reflects the child's probability of selection.

3.2.1 Within Household Selection

For the parent interview, a maximum of two eligible children was selected per household. The child weight is adjusted for the child's probability of selection within the household. In households with no more than two children aged 12 or younger, each child was chosen with certainty. In households with more than two children aged 12 or younger, two children were randomly selected with a probability less than one.

3.2.2 Poststratification (Child-Level) Adjustment

To increase the precision of the child-level estimates, the survey weights were adjusted to match Fairfax County population counts from Census 2000. County population totals were obtained for the levels of age (0 to 5 years, 6 to 12 years), gender, and ethnicity (Hispanic, non-Hispanic). An iterative ratio adjustment was used so that the weighted child totals would match the Census counts for each characteristic. This poststratified weight is the final child weight.

4 Sampling Error

The findings presented in this report come from a sample survey. The samples of households with telephones selected for this study is just one of many possible samples that could have been selected from all households with telephones in Fairfax County and Fairfax City. Similarly, the within-household samples of children represent one of many possible samples of children. Estimates produced from the survey may differ from estimates that would have been produced from other samples. This type of variability is called sampling error because it arises from using a sample of households with telephones rather than all households with telephones.